PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT

By Laurie Ordin

A
S I SIT DOWN TO WRITE THIS MONTH’S Ponderings, I’ve had more time to read the paper and listen to news than I usually do because we are between semesters and I’m not teaching. Sometimes I think that one of the reasons I continue to teach is because it keeps me very busy and I don’t have time to pay so much attention to what is going on in the world. When I do pay attention, it seems that the entire world is exploding with violence, disease and anger. The list is long: Ukraine, North Korea, West Africa, Syria, Gaza/Israel, to name just a few.

Somehow it seems almost shallow to be writing about what I usually end up writing about, labor and economics. On the other hand, as I think about it a little more, why do we go to war? Power, control, religious beliefs (which can often be at least partly construed as power and control.) So I guess it’s ok to write about what has been percolating in my mind since I just finished reading my latest book club book, The Paradise by Emile Zola.

This book is about the rise of a Paris department store at the end of the nineteenth century. It goes into great detail about the working conditions, treatment, attitudes and behaviors of the store’s employees. At the same time we read about the charming, clever, tremendously ambitious and, dare I say, greedy owner. Not to be left out are the descriptions of the women who shop at the store and somehow try to fulfill themselves by doing so.

We read a great deal about how hard most of the employees are worked and how little they are rewarded for what they do relative to the huge receipts of the store. At the same time we see how wretchedly the employees treat each other, always looking for an opening or way to step over each other in order to gain a more advantageous position for themselves. The protagonist, herself, is treated abysmally by most of her colleagues, but the owner sees something special in her that leads him to advance her. At one point she finds herself in a position that allows her to make significant changes in the working conditions of her colleagues, and in spite of how miserably she had been treated by them, she makes changes that greatly improve things for them. These changes lead most of the employees to truly respect the protagonist and this turns the entire...
company ethic around. People treat each other with respect and almost everyone is happier and more at peace. Of course they are more able to do a good job, as well.

There are many parallels in this book to our modern day business practices as the reader of The Paradise watches small established businesses being decimated by the new big department store. People’s livelihoods and lives are ruined while others take obscene profits. I can’t help but hear the word “disruption” in my mind, a word that is used so often today as a descriptor for how new businesses gain a foothold in our economy as they destroy others. I also can’t help but think that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

During my tenure at College of Marin, I have lived through times of great mistrust and fear, but also times of feeling well respected. I know that when we, as faculty members, feel respected we are able to do the very best we can for our students. An ongoing theme in our convocation speaker’s address was “equity”, which he basically defined as justice. I hope as we begin this new academic year and continue negotiating our new contract, that the District practices the message that they brought to us at Convocation, truly appreciates us (not just with lip service), and realizes the benefit they will bring to the students by offering us a fair and equitable contract that respects what we do and doesn’t make us feel that only upper management is important enough to deserve a generous wage and benefits package. Your collective bargaining team is hard at work to try to bring such a contract to you. So stay informed, stay in touch, and stay involved.

Here’s to a great academic year for us all! □
EDITORIAL

IT’S NOT OFTEN THAT WE CAN identify role models among Educational Administrators – administrators whom we can admire and respect.

Surely not Harvard president Larry Summers, who hypothesized that the shortage of women in scientific disciplines could be explained by innate differences in mathematical ability.

Or U.C. Chancellor Clark Kerr, who in 1967 acquiesced to the arrest of hundreds of Berkeley students who were protesting a ban on campus political activity.

Or S. I. Hayakawa of San Francisco State, who had 700 students arrested for demonstrating in favor of an Ethnic Studies program on campus.

And certainly not Graham Spanier, president of Penn State, who was being paid three million dollars a year during which time Jerry Sandusky was abusing young boys.

Nor do most of us have high regard for those college presidents who are being paid over $800,000 a year while janitors and groundskeepers at their schools are receiving minimum wage, and adjunct professors are earning barely enough to not qualify for food stamps.

So it was a pleasant surprise last week to read about one college administrator whom we can admire – Raymond Burse, president of Kentucky State University, who decided to give up one quarter of his salary ($90,000) so that the lowest paid employees at his school would receive a boost in their paychecks.

When asked why he was willing to sacrifice such a large portion of his paycheck for lesser paid employees, President Burse said that he had high expectations of his staff, and that “I thought that if I’m going to ask them to really be committed and give this institution their all, I should be doing something in return.”

Recently, educational administrators at our own college were granted a 20 to 40% annual wage increase.* Given that they, like President Burse, expect the rest of us to be really committed and “give our all” to CoM, mightn’t we expect that they, like Burse, would similarly do something in return, like sharing some of their recently received largess with some of our lowest paid employees?

Or if that sounds too self-serving, how about if they offered to rebate some of their recent wage increase in the amount necessary to cancel the new 33% rise in student parking fees?**

Surely that would show that our administrators, like Burse, are committed to our institution and are willing to do something to help the students they repeatedly say they serve.

It’s called “Putting your money where your mouth is.”

* [A 20% raise for our CoM President ($40,000), and a 30% raise for our Vice-Presidents. Plus an additional 10% ($20,000) yearly stipend for our Vice-President of Student Services.]

** [As of July 1, daily student parking fees have increased by 33% – from $3/da to $4/da.]

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Talk is cheap. A university can talk all it likes about “values,” but nothing reveals what it truly values more than the blunt numeric value it assigns to different kinds of work. Consider what a university is communicating when it has most of its actual teaching performed by underpaid adjuncts. They may say they “value” teaching, but in actual fact, they don’t.

Fred Clark, Blogger
Slacktivist
OVER THE PAST MONTHS and as recently as 8/14/14, your UPM Bargaining Team has been meeting with District reps and working on your behalf to attain the best contract possible. We’re getting close on many articles, but there are still items that need much more refinement. We’re a good distance apart on wages and benefits, two of the most important articles. We will continue to report on our progress as we make headway.

On a positive note, we have reached a tentative agreement on the SERP retirement incentive package. It looks like this:

1. The District shall pay 65% of the employee’s base salary into a fixed guaranteed annuity per the current salary schedule.
2. SERP eligibility criteria: 55 years of age and 7 years of service by June 30, 2015
3. The District will provide Special Return Rights for SERP Participant’s as follows: Unit members retiring as of December 31, 2014 may return in the fall semester of 2015 and spring semester of 2016; Unit members retiring on June 30, 2015 may return in the spring semester of 2016.
4. Unit members electing retirement will have preferential treatment of available part-time units in the discipline(s) from which the Unit Members retire, not to exceed six (6) (instructional and non-instructional) units per semester.
5. SERP retirees re-enter at Step 14.
6. Unit Members eligible for SERP shall include:
   ✓ All eligible full-time unit members on Reduced Load.
   ✓ All eligible unit members on Sabbatical Leave.
   ✓ All eligible members of Phased-in Retirement.
   ✓ All eligible full-time permanent unit members.

To attain this retirement incentive, the UPM Bargaining Team has argued that the District should respect the years of service that eligible employees have put into the College of Marin and reward them for their dedication.

The District, in agreeing to the above conditions, is acknowledging the years of work and commitment of our colleagues. Now that we have reached an agreement on this SERP package, more details will be coming out soon. If you are considering retirement, please keep your eyes peeled.

In the coming weeks, we will meet with the District to discuss the intricacies of wages and benefits, and, as always, we will keep you posted of our progress.

“Now that there is SERP I can afford to retire.”
LABOR HISTORY

M ONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1ST IS LABOR DAY – a day established to honor the contributions of American workers.

Actually, there are two labor days – the one that we celebrate here in the United States on Sept 1st, with picnics and barbeques and the obligatory speeches by politicians praising the contributions of individual workers; and the other labor day that is celebrated throughout the world on May 1st called MAY DAY (International Workers’ Day).

The difference between the two days has to do with two different views regarding how workers can acquire a share of the wealth of the world.

The Labor Day that we celebrate in the U.S. on Sept 1, emphasizes a partnership between labor and capital, with labor seeking some share of the wealth that working people have created, but leaving the ownership of the means of production and the major share of wealth in the hands of private profiteers.

The view of those who celebrate MAY DAY (International Workers Day), is that since all wealth is created by members of the working class, it is the “working class” (the proletariat) who should own the means of production and the wealth that it accrues.

Perhaps a good statement of these two divergent views was expressed in Labor Day speeches given by Eugene Debs, three-time Socialist Party candidate for U.S. President, and the Reagan administration economist Arthur Laffer.

DEBS: Comrades, this is the day for Workingmen to think of the Class Struggle – the day for Labor to clasp the hand of Labor and girdle the globe with the International Revolutionary Solidarity of the Working Class. Death to wage-slavery! Death to Capitalism!

LAFFER: Labor and capital are not enemies – without capitalism there would be no production – no wages. Labor and capital are complements, not substitutes.

Whichever view you subscribe to, have a HAPPY LABOR DAY!

LABOR QUIZ

W HICH OF THE FOLLOWING heroic American Labor activists has been featured on a U.S. Postage Stamp? Mary Harris Jones (“Mother Jones”); Joe Hill; Eugene V. Debs; Lucy Parsons: None of the above.

Answer: None of the above. There was, however, a stamp issued honoring steel and railroad robber-baron Andrew Carnegie.

ERP – BER P – SERP!

A FTER MONTHS OF NEGOTIATING, UPM and the District have arrived at an agreement on the terms of a new Supplemental Employee Retirement Plan (SERP). See John’s Collective Bargaining Update on previous page for details.

AFT HOLDS NATIONAL CONVENTION

D ELEGATES TO THE 2014 AFT CONVENTION on July 13th in Los Angeles re-elected AFT President Sandy Weingarten to a third term. In her keynote address Weingarten outlined a plan to fight back against the coordinated attack by right-wing ideologues who want to destroy “economic and educational opportunity for all.” Her keynote address may be accessed at: http://www.aft.org/newspubs/press/weingarten07114.cfm.

UPM Newsletter August 2014
REMEMBERING ROBIN WILLIAMS  
- FRIEND OF LABOR –

by Michael Winship  
Senior Writer  
Moyers & Company  
August 12. 2014

MEMORIES OF ROBIN WILLIAMS. “The last time I was in his presence was during the 2007-08 Writers Guild strike. Robin showed up to walk our picket line at the Time-Warner Center on Columbus Circle, New York City, a couple of blocks from where the Moyers & Company offices are now. He came bearing bagels. Lots and lots of bagels. He was, as a colleague said, a mensch.”

Actor David Duchovny, talks with Robin Williams as Williams arrives to join the picket line during the fourth day of a strike by television and film writers, Nov. 8, 2007, at the Time Warner Center in New York. (AP Photo/Tina Fineberg)

NEW UPM OFFICE, SOON

BECAUSE TB 1 (the building where our UPM office is currently located) is scheduled for demolition, we will be moving to new digs.

Our new office will be located in Village Square, (formerly known as the Portable Village), out past Kineseology, (formerly known as Physical Education) near HR (formerly known as Personnel). We will be located in room PV 12 (VS12?) (formerly a classroom). The move will take place sometime in October (formerly scheduled for July.) In the mean time, we remain in building TB 1, Rm 124. Come Visit. Don’t stand on form-altity.

UPM Newsletter

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August 2014

CONVOCATION OBSERVATIONS

LAST FRIDAY, WITH HIS USUAL infectious buoyancy, Dr. Coon hosted our Fall 2014 Convocation, introducing new faculty and staff and eliciting personal accomplishments and exploits from the assembled. It was a cheerful and positive start to a new semester and was appreciated by all.

One issue however, was problematic. In his attempt to project an optimistic view of the college’s positive accomplishments under his leadership, (and there are truly many positive accomplishments,) Dr. Coon urged not to “dwell” on the failures of past administrations.

Many of our newer faculty may not realize that this was an unstated reference to the failures of the Fran White administration. And what Dr. Coon was perhaps suggesting is that those of us who were working here during the Fran White “reign of terror,” should keep silent about it, so as not to encourage a pessimism among the newly hired.

Certainly there is a value in “moving on” and “not dwelling on the past.” But there is also a value in “learning from the past,” to ensure that it isn’t repeated.

We all know (and I’m certain that Dr. Coon knows) the famous George Santayana quote about what can happen if one forgets the events of the past, so to suggest that our senior faculty should be mum about what happened at our school, can either lead to a Pollyanna view of our challenges, or perhaps worse; a reversion to past iniquities.

Those of us who are senior faculty would have preferred if Dr. Coon had honored and affirmed our historical memory, so that our college doesn’t repeat a past that Dr. Coon is so ably trying to change.

Arthur Lutz

THE STRONGEST BOND OF HUMAN SYMPATHY OUTSIDE THE FAMILY SHOULD BE THE ONE UNITING WORKING PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS AND TONGUES AND KINDREDS.

Abraham Lincoln
NEW UPM DUES STRUCTURE

AS MANDATED BY OUR UPM CONSTITUTION, we are required, if directed, to increase the per capita portion of our membership dues (that portion that is sent directly to our State and National affiliates, the California and American Federation of Teachers.) Accordingly, our new monthly dues schedule is as follows, effective September 1, 2014.

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<th>CATEGORY</th>
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Definitions:
All rates are per month for eligible unit members.

Category #1-- All non-credit instructors teaching on a quarter system. Semester system non-credit instructors are in categories #2, #3 or #4.

Category #2-- Non-credit instructors on a semester system, counselors, librarians, other certificated or instructors working the equivalent of up to and including 4 teaching units.

Category #3-- Non-credit instructors on a semester system, counselors, librarians, other certificated or instructors working the equivalent of more than 4 teaching units, but less than 6 teaching units.

Category #4-- Non-credit instructors on a semester system, counselors, librarians, other certificated or instructors working the equivalent of 6 teaching units up to and including 10 teaching units.

Category #5-- All permanent/probationary counselors, librarians, other certificated or instructors; sabbatical or other leave replacements.

UPM’s financial records are audited yearly, and are available for inspection by UPM members in the Union office. If you wish to review our records, please contact our Union Executive Secretaries, Nancy or Josette to arrange a convenient time.

PANCAKES & POLITICS!

WE’RE ALL INVITED to the NORTH BAY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO’s annual Labor Day 2014 pancake breakfast.

Join Union Members, Activists, Working Class Heroes, & their Families & Friends to celebrate:

LABOR-WITH-SYRUP!!
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2014
CARPENTERS’ LABOR CENTER
1700 CORBY AVE, SANTA ROSA, CA 95407
BREAKFAST SERVED AT 8 A.M.
For Information, call: 707-545-6970 (Office)
707-508-7894 (Cell) cindiclc@sonic.net

LABOR DAY REMARKS OF PRESIDENT OBAMA

Hi, everybody. This Labor Day weekend, as we gather with family and friends, we’ll also come together as a nation to honor some of our own – the working men and women of America who, across the generations, built this country up and helped make us who we are today.

So, while you’re out there grilling in the backyard, or taking that final trip for the summer, I hope you’ll also take a moment to reflect on the many contributions of our working men and women. For generations, it was the great American middle class that made our economy the envy of the world. And as long as I’m President, I’m going to keep fighting to make sure that happens again.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.
Barack Obama
TEN REASONS WE'RE AGAINST
UNIONS!

1. Unions just want to line their own pockets!
2. I prefer having no power!
3. I deserve less pay than men.
4. I wouldn't want the company wasting money making my job safer!
5. Speaking objectively, all unions are evil! Eewwwllll!
6. Who cares if unions reduce the pay gap between non-white and white workers?
7. It's wrong that unions spend money influencing Congress. Only business should get to do that!
8. Who cares if unions have only our interests at heart?
9. Unlike bosses, who have only our interests at heart.
10. Other than weekends, lunch breaks, overtime pay, parental leave, pension plans, higher wages, and sick leave, what good have unions ever done?

UPM MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I hereby apply for membership in the United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610

Name: ____________________________ SS#: ____________________________
Address: __________________________ City: __________________________ Zip: __________________________
Date: ____________________________ Email: __________________________
Home Phone: _______________________ Campus Ext: __________

Check the appropriate category:

___ I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement
___ I am a temporary credit or non-credit employee on the semester system
___ I am a Community Education Instructor

Return to the UPM mailbox or to the UPM Office.
And please make sure you have completed the UPM payroll deduction option, in Human Resources.

Please Note: Unless you have filled out the above UPM Membership Application, you are only paying a representation fee and you are not entitled to UPM's full membership benefits.